



US006236866B1

(12) **United States Patent**
Meyer et al.

(10) Patent No.: **US 6,236,866 B1**
(45) Date of Patent: **May 22, 2001**

(54) **ADAPTIVE ANTENNA PATTERN CONTROL
FOR A MULTIPLE ACCESS
COMMUNICATION SYSTEM**

5,563,610 10/1996 Reudink 342/375
5,574,989 11/1996 Watson et al. 455/101

(List continued on next page.)

(75) Inventors: **Ronald L. Meyer, Plano; Ramalah
Velldi, Dallas, both of TX (US)**

(73) Assignee: **Raytheon Company, Lexington, MA
(US)**

(*) Notice: Subject to any disclaimer, the term of this
patent is extended or adjusted under 35
U.S.C. 154(b) by 0 days.

(21) Appl. No.: **09/298,713**

(22) Filed: **Apr. 23, 1999**

Related U.S. Application Data

(60) Provisional application No. 60/085,749, filed on May 15,
1998.

(51) Int. Cl.⁷ **H04Q 7/20**

(52) U.S. Cl. **455/562; 370/342**

(58) Field of Search 455/422, 562,
455/279.1, 517, 453, 424, 425; 370/341,
347, 342, 441, 442, 333, 332, 334, 335,
320, 311, 479; 343/726, 703, 751; 342/360,
368, 373

(56) **References Cited**

U.S. PATENT DOCUMENTS

4,747,160 * 5/1988 Bossard 455/33
4,896,371 1/1990 Kahn 455/105
4,931,802 6/1990 Assal et al. 342/356
4,965,605 10/1990 Chang et al. 343/700 MS
5,014,067 * 5/1991 Chisholm 342/407
5,081,463 * 1/1992 Hariu et al. 342/372
5,203,018 4/1993 Hirose 455/61
5,276,907 1/1994 Meidan 455/333
5,319,677 6/1994 Kim 375/100
5,432,780 * 7/1995 Smith et al. 370/37
5,488,737 1/1996 Harbin et al. 455/33.1
5,542,107 7/1996 Kay 455/33.1
5,548,813 8/1996 Charas et al. 455/33.3

FOREIGN PATENT DOCUMENTS

0624919A1 11/1994 (EP) .
0668627A1 8/1995 (EP) .
0777400A2 6/1997 (EP) H04Q/7/36
0837523A2 4/1998 (EP) H01Q/3/26
2290006A 12/1995 (GB) .
2301712A 12/1996 (GB) .
WO 95/22210 8/1995 (WO) H04B/7/26
WO95/26116 9/1995 (WO) .
WO 97/11508 3/1997 (WO) H01Q/25/00

OTHER PUBLICATIONS

Metawave™ Spotlight™ 2000 (Advertisement) "Amps and
Namps".

Primary Examiner—Edward F. Urban

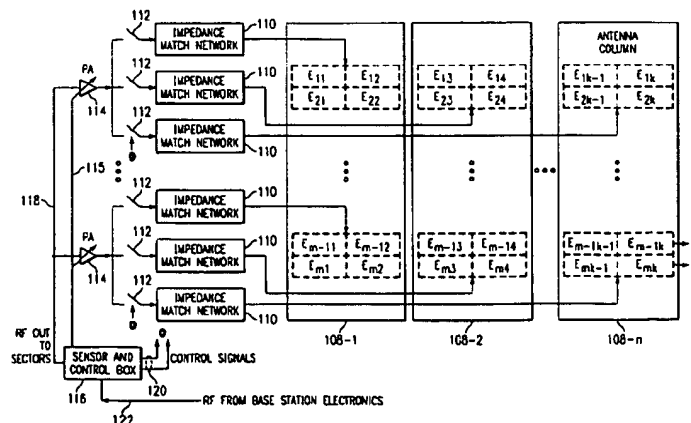
Assistant Examiner—Congvan Tran

(74) Attorney, Agent, or Firm—Baker Botts L.L.P.

(57) **ABSTRACT**

Dynamic antenna pattern modification is accomplished with multi-element, multi-column antennas having the radiation pattern controlled dynamically based on the number of users serviced by the sectors of a multi-sector base station. The number of users is determined either directly through information available from the base station, or indirectly by monitoring the system load (number of users). Sectors of the cell servicing fewer users are expanded to accommodate users from portions of an adjacent sector, in the same cell, by modification of the antenna coverage patterns in each sector. The antenna pattern for a sector serving a relatively large number of users, for a given cell radius, would contract in azimuth for both transmit and receive functions and decrease both transmitted output power and received signal sensitivity. Simultaneously, antenna coverage patterns in the adjacent sector (in the same cell) would expand in azimuth to provide the same cell radius, coverage and performance level as prior to the pattern modification.

14 Claims, 5 Drawing Sheets



U.S. PATENT DOCUMENTS

5,596,333	*	1/1997	Bruckert	342/457	5,936,577	*	8/1999	Shoki et al.	342/373
5,648,968		7/1997	Reudink	370/33	5,940,029	*	8/1999	Ninomiya et al.	342/372
5,812,935		9/1998	Kay	455/56.1	6,038,459	*	3/2000	Searle et al.	455/562
5,920,813	*	7/1999	Evans et al.	455/422	6,070,090	*	5/2000	Feuerstein	455/561

* cited by examiner

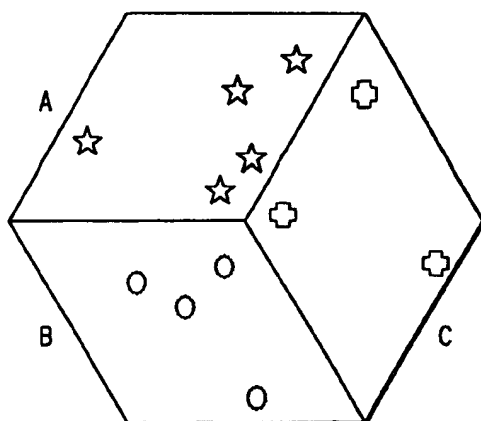


FIG. 1a

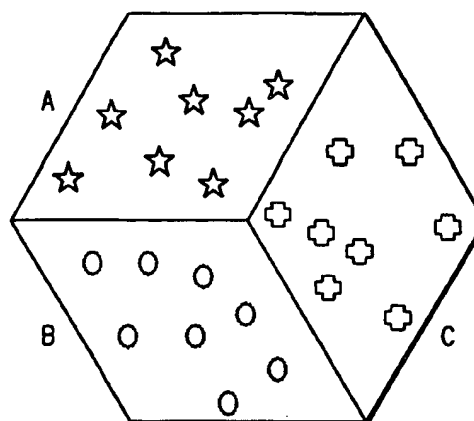


FIG. 1b

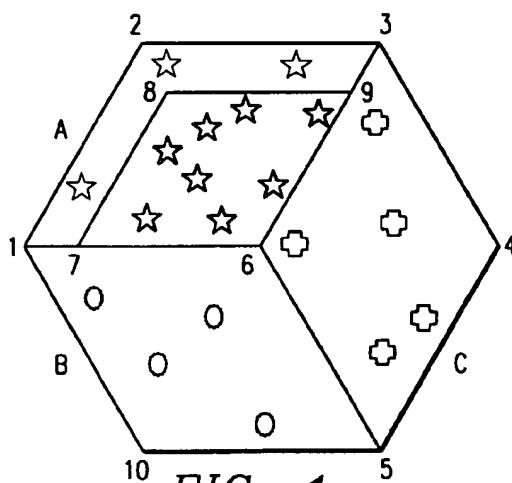


FIG. 1c

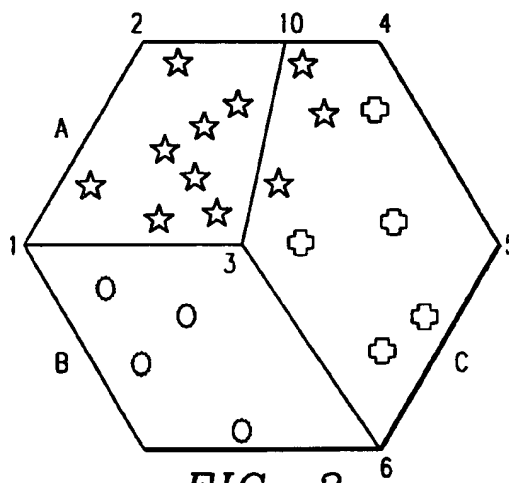


FIG. 2

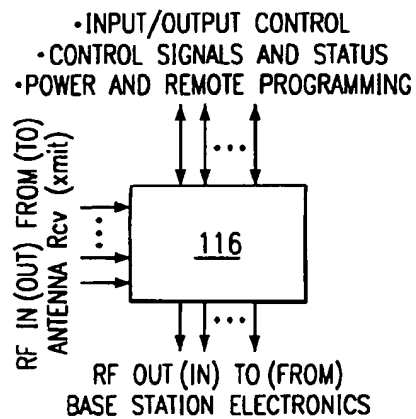
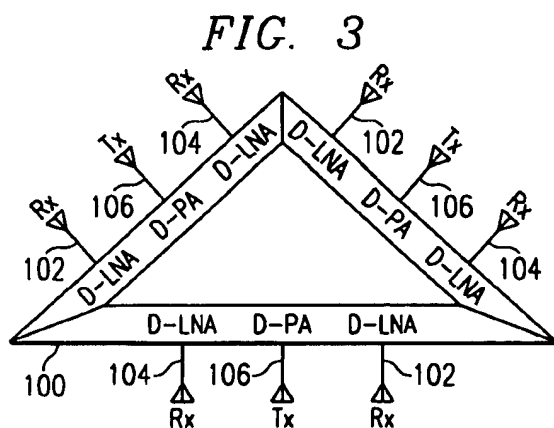


FIG. 5

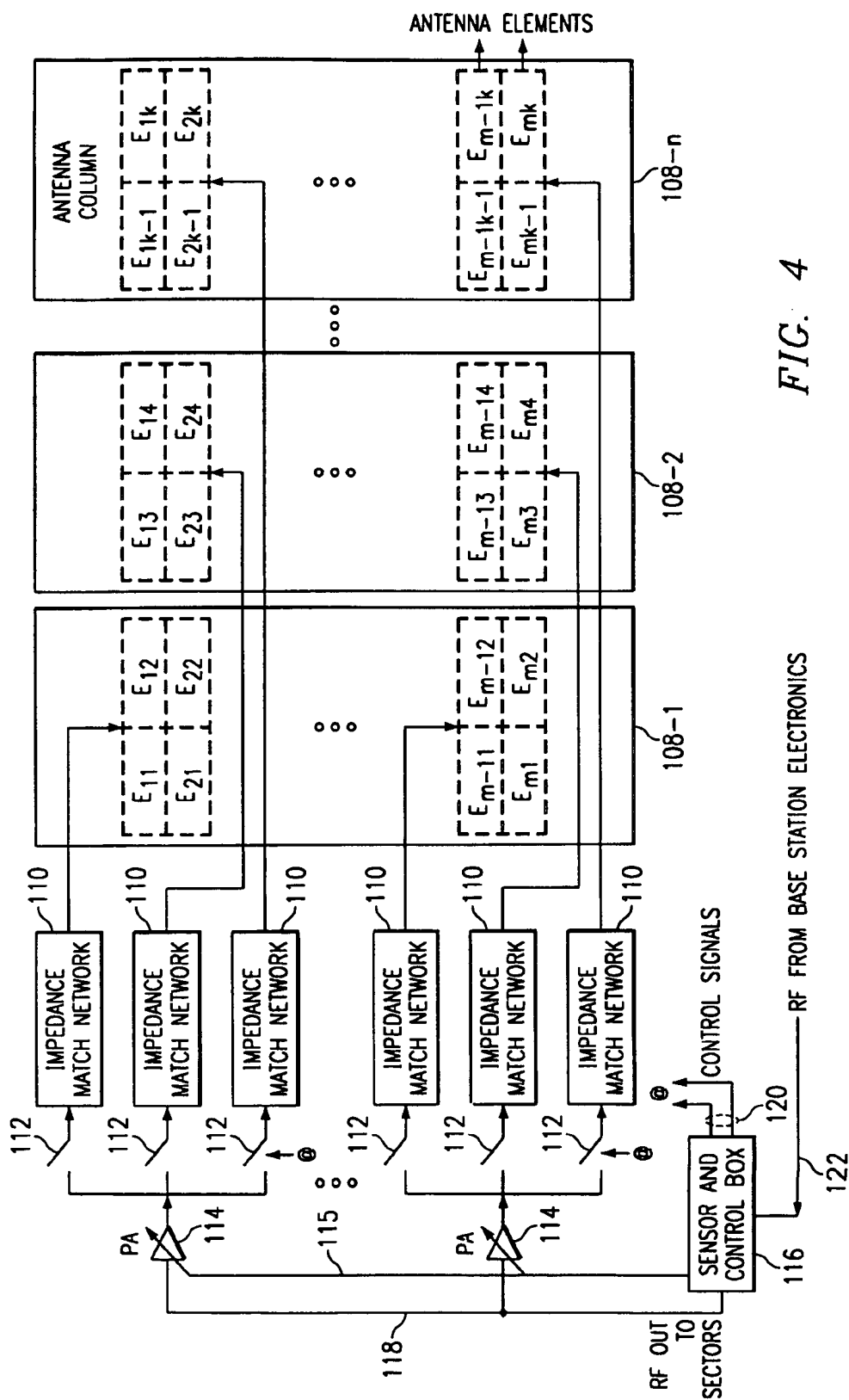


FIG. 4

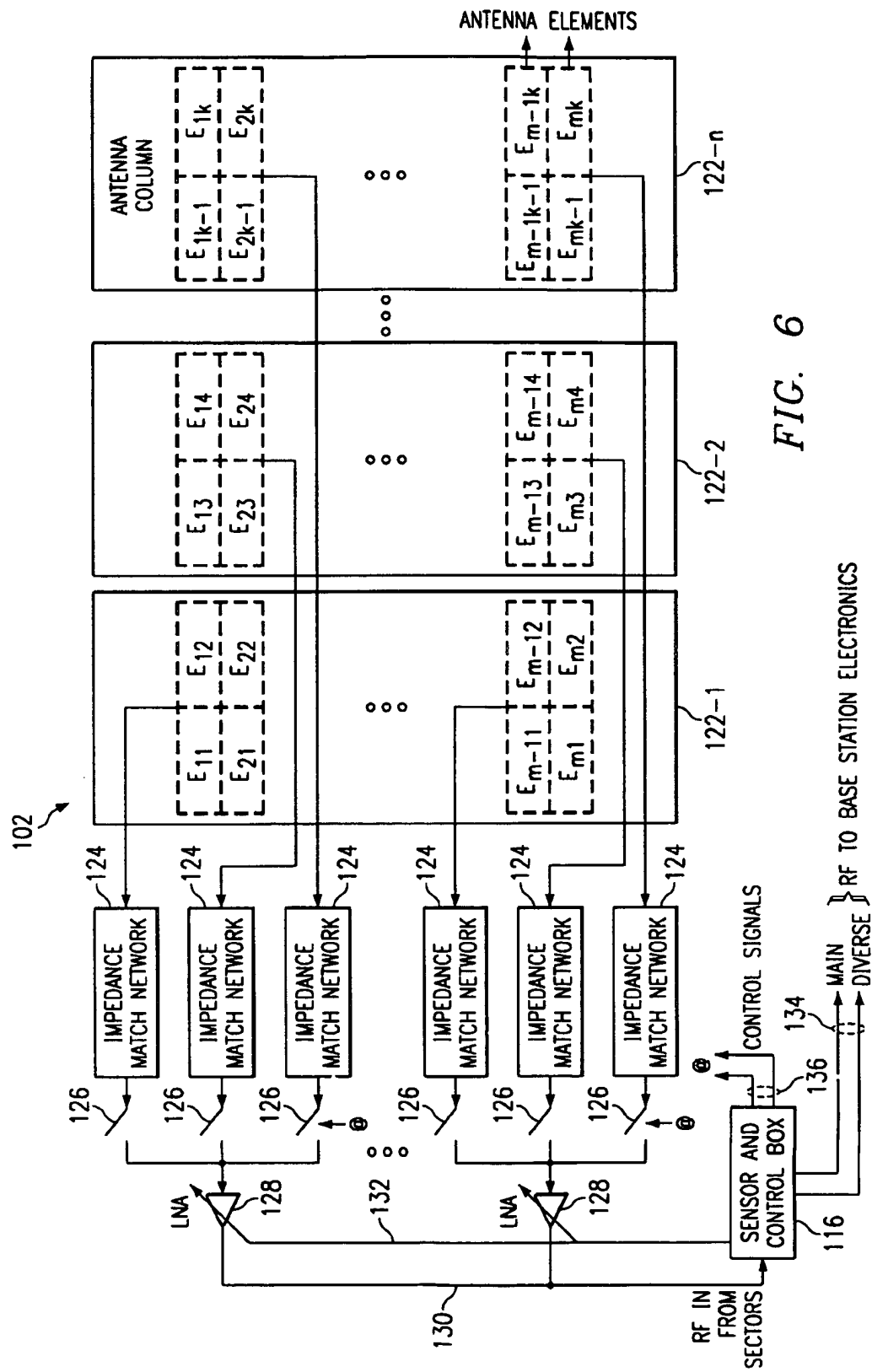


FIG. 6

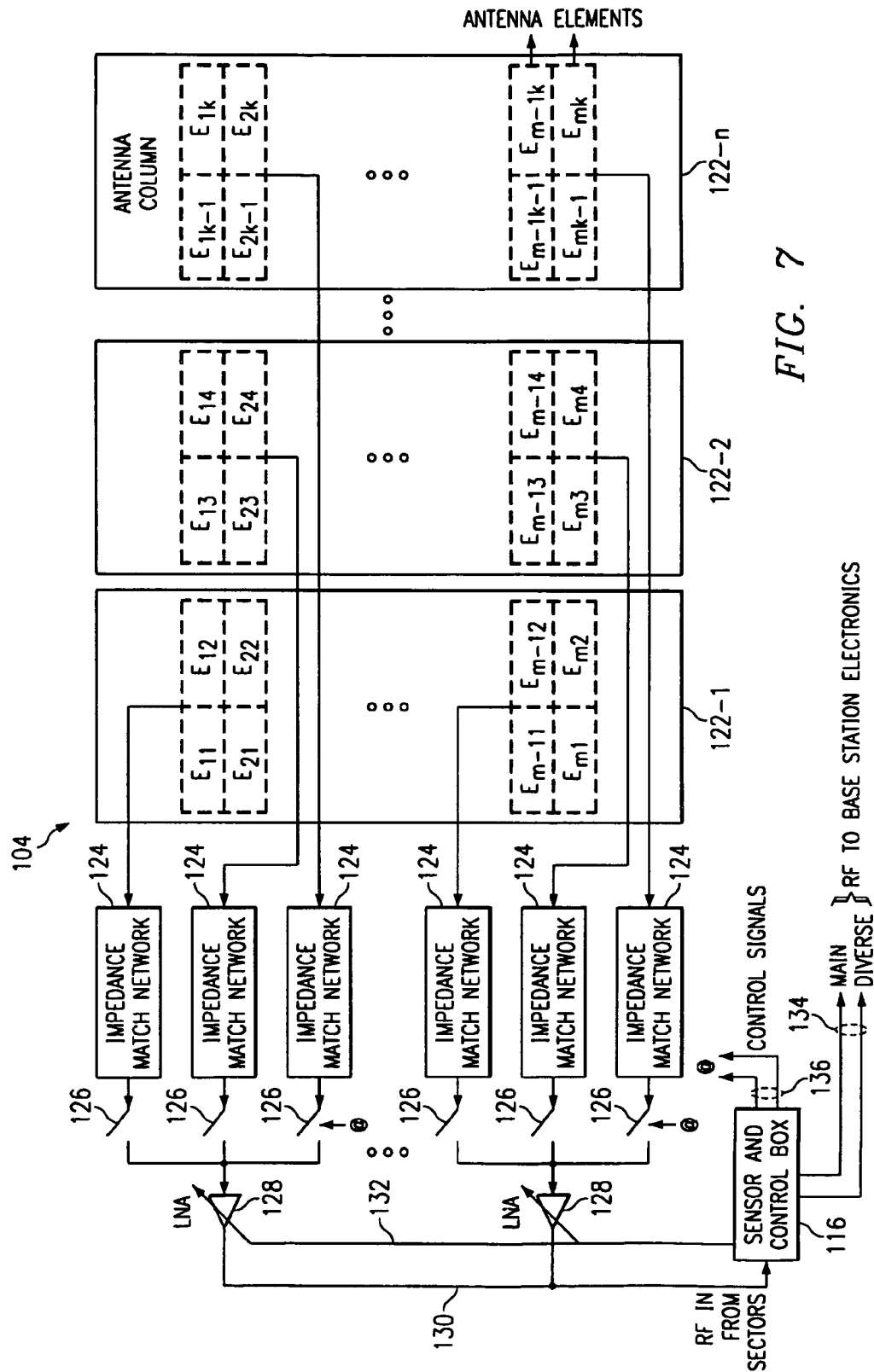


FIG. 7

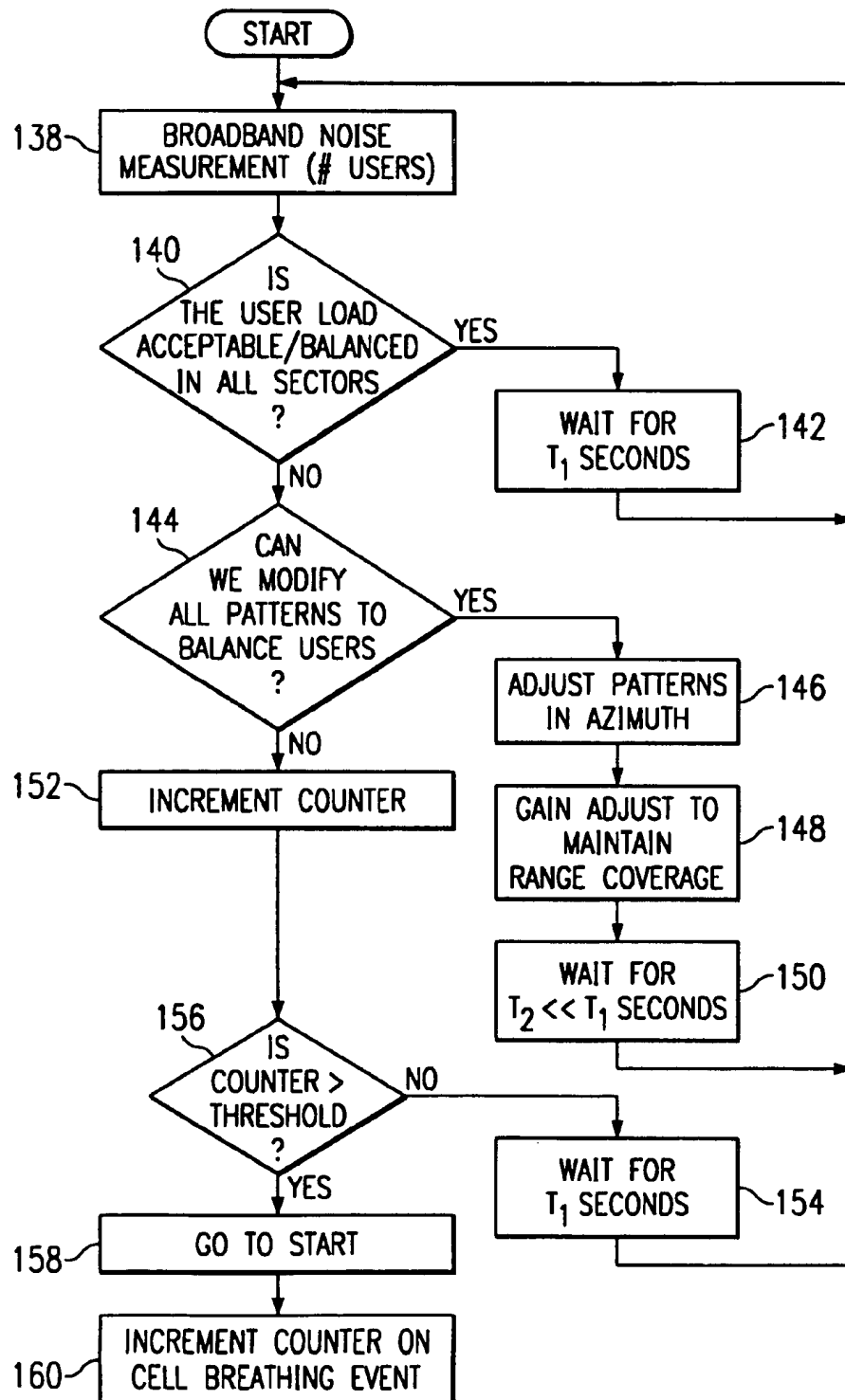


FIG. 8

1

ADAPTIVE ANTENNA PATTERN CONTROL FOR A MULTIPLE ACCESS COMMUNICATION SYSTEM

RELATED APPLICATION

This application claims the benefit of pending U.S. provisional application Ser. No. 60/085,749, filed May 15, 1998, entitled ADAPTIVE ANTENNA PATTERN CONTROL FOR A MULTIPLE ACCESS COMMUNICATION SYSTEM.

TECHNICAL FIELD OF THE INVENTION

The present invention relates to wireless communications systems and in particular to apparatus and a method for antenna pattern modification to mitigate cell breathing.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

In wireless mobile code division multiple access (CDMA) communication systems, capacity and coverage are inter-related in a manner dictated by some key principles—the radio links are designed to operate at a minimum level consistent with voice quality; coverage area is dictated by area where the mobile station has sufficient power to achieve the target bit energy-to-noise ratio at the cell site (also known as the base station and referred to as BS) receiver. These considerations lead to fundamental design tradeoffs in CDMA systems—design coverage increases with lower capacity; coverage and or capacity increases with reduced voice quality.

CDMA is a modulation and multiple access scheme that is based on spread spectrum communications. CDMA signals are generated by modulating the data with pseudo-noise codes (for the particular case of direct sequence CDMA systems, these PN codes are a sequence of chips taking on values +1 or -1) which are signature codes assigned to individual users (herein referred to as mobile stations or MS). In a wireless mobile communication system, an MS communicates directly with the fixed entity, BS. The BS receiver identifies the individual MS by de-spreading the pseudo-noise signature codes and information data is extracted by demodulation.

CDMA communication systems are subject to one basic limitation that effects operation and design: all users are inherently interfering signals to all other users. This effects the CDMA system architecture and determines the limit (maximum theoretical user number) on how many interfering users can be present before system operation degrades to unacceptable levels. Additionally, maximum user capacity calculations inherently presume that all conditions are ideal. In a real world application of most systems this is not true, and CDMA systems are no different. With typical CDMA systems, even using perfectly orthogonal spreading codes, issues related to practical deployment become the main driver in the system (and therefore a network of systems) capacity calculations and functional operation. Each cell is surrounded by other cells that are transmitting similar (interfering) signals. Further, all users are not an equal distance from the base station causing each user's signal to be received with unequal strength compared to all other users (although user power control is attempted with modest success). In addition, the RF propagation environment provides multiple opportunities for signals to be reflected thereby causing unwanted signal strength variations at both the base station and the mobile station (Rayleigh fading, another effect attempted to be controlled by implementation

2

of user power control). Together, these effects contribute to a reduction in the total system capacity, compared to theoretical maximums, along with variable system service coverage areas that change based on the number of users of the system. Additionally, implementation inaccuracies of the various algorithms in hardware and software typically further restrict the total number of users to a practical maximum limit.

Since each user is an interfering signal to all of the other users, the chosen system implementation (spreading code and bandwidth, data transmission rate, power control implementation, base station layout, and "soft" handoff algorithm and implementation) determines the total number of users which, as an undesired by-product, also determines the coverage area. Users with higher power than others present stronger interfering signals than weak power users, and therefore limit the overall number of users on the system by virtue of their signal strength. Once a system architecture has been chosen, CDMA system capacity is determined by the total interference power in the system; this power level can be generated by several high power users or by many more users of equally low power. The effect can be described as follows. When there are few users on the system, cells are relatively far apart, the coverage area of a typical cell is large, there are few interfering signals competing at the base station for network access, and weak signals (at the minimum designed receive signal level) are recognized and accepted. As more phone calls are accepted into the network the success of the system's ability to control each user's power becomes much more important. Those users closest to the base station would have a decided advantage over those far away, if no power control were implemented, since stronger users have a decided advantage in making phone calls (up to the maximum practical user limit). Typical wireless mobile phone CDMA systems address this situation by attempting to control the power transmitted by each user such that those both near to and far from the base station have the same power level at the receiver, and therefore an equal chance to acquire network resources (a "channel"). The measures taken to accomplish this are not completely successful, which accounts for some of the differences in capacity between expected theoretical and practical user limits of the typical CDMA system. The net effect of imperfect power control and real-world fading environments combined with a maximum practical user limit on each served area is that users further from the base station receive access only if the total user count in each served area is less than the maximum practical limit associated with that CDMA system. Given the inaccuracies of the power control implementation, even close users can be dropped from service if users closer to the base station request service and receive a channel to make a phone call. This effect has been referred to as the "breathing cell" phenomenon, meaning that the coverage area of a CDMA cell depends on how many users are accessing the system, their power, and their location at any time. As a result, CDMA service providers have trouble in determining where to place base stations in a network. It is difficult, if not impossible, to determine exact coverage areas based on typical RF propagation effects since the number of users, their location, and success of power control of the system determines the coverage pattern.

This "cell breathing" issue has been typically addressed in a brute force manner. The service provider essentially doubles the number of base stations covering a certain geographic area, compared to typical TDMA network layouts, such that most of the area is covered by at least two base stations, and sometimes three or more. This technique

3

attempts to ensure that continued coverage is provided for users who have initiated phone calls and are being served by the network even when other users closer to the base station make phone calls into the network. Since the signal from the mobile in question is strong at several base stations, the phone call may be maintained if it is transferred from one base station to the other. Thus, the user in danger of being dropped has the call transferred by the network to another base station that has less than the maximum number of users so that the call is maintained. When the number of users of both base stations has reached the practical user limit, any new users vying for service are denied access. As a practical matter, this limit will eventually be reached in any system given more customers in a service area than the design limits of the CDMA.

In any mobile cellular system there exist two fundamental problems that a system designer has to deal with.

Multi-path fading of the radio link. This is a phenomenon where radio frequency (RF) signals when transmitted from either the MS or BS traverse multiple paths due to reflections off different objects in the environment before they arrive at the receiving antenna. These multiple reflected paths or multi-path components combine, either constructively or destructively, to produce fades in signal strength.

Multiple access interference or MAI. In CDMA systems, all MS transmit on the same frequency when communicating with the BS and therefore, as mentioned, each MS is a source of interference to every other MS. The level of MAI, to a first degree of approximation, is directly proportional to the number of MS signals received at the serving BS.

CDMA systems exploit the wideband characteristic of the spread spectrum waveforms to resolve the multi-path components and thus, provide the receiver with several independently fading signal paths. This path diversity is exploited by the use of a RAKE receiver to combine the different multi-path components. The same wideband nature of the CDMA signals is used to mitigate the MAI.

The link from the MS to BS is typically asynchronous and such a system is vulnerable to the near-far problem, that is, the problem of very strong undesired MS signals at the receiver swamping out the effects of a weaker, desired MS's signal. A solution to the near-far problem is the use of power control, which attempts to ensure that all signals from the mobiles within a given cell coverage area arrive at the BS of that cell with equal power. Coverage area or range performance is determined by the serving BS. A critical variable is the ratio of single bit energy-to-noise, E_b/N_0 , which is analogous to the signal-to-noise ratio in analog systems. An MS has to adjust power—increase or decrease—very fast to achieve target E_b/N_0 at the cell site receiver in an attempt to overcome the effects of multi-path fading. But when the MS is close to the edge of the BS coverage area it may be transmitting at peak power output. As the number of the MS increase, the MS at the cell edge will not be able to increase transmit power enough to achieve the target E_b/N_0 . Consequently, the range or coverage is sacrificed, resulting in the BS dropping the MS at the cell edge.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

In accordance with the present invention, the basic effect of "cell breathing" coverage that varies by time of day due to traffic loads distributed unevenly across the cell is significantly mitigated through use of a dynamically sectored smart antenna (Dynamically Sectored Smart Antenna or

4

DSSA) that contains both transmit and receive amplification electronics integrated with the antenna elements.

The DSSA design allows automatic and dynamic control and stabilization of geographical coverage of a cell without utilizing any feedback signal demodulated from the air interface with mobile station(s) in the coverage area. The antenna system operates on a "cell" basis with the possibility for any number of subdivisions of the 360 degree coverage that can be assigned or borrowed to efficiently utilize all of the capacity of the cell. Compared to fixed coverage antennas that restrict base station electronics to fixed RF/geographical areas, the DSSA allows for variation in both the range and azimuth coverage of a cell so that maintenance of substantial geographic coverage in a CDMA cell is possible. Extended coverage (compared to typical installations with tower top amplifiers) is provided initially, while user demand is light, due to the benefits of electronics/amplification integrated into the array. As network utilization and base station activity increases the DSSA will be programmed (in software and/or hardware) to convert from a range extension product to a capacity optimization and improvement product through use of the variable azimuth coverage. Range extension is initially provided through use of receive and transmit amplifiers that are distributed across the antenna elements. This integrated electronics array architecture, allows for dynamically adjustable gain on both receive and transmit, as well as soft degradation in the event of component failure. Dynamically adjustable gain is utilized to increase range coverage to maximum limits during initial system build out or, when capacity needs increase, to maintain a desired, fixed, range coverage with different azimuth coverage in sections of a cell, to enable full utilization of base station resources across the entire coverage area of the cell. Control of coverage areas is adjusted automatically by observation of one or more metrics, inherent in CDMA system operation, that provide an indication of the number of users of any sector of a cell. The information necessary to monitor these metrics will be determined independently by the antenna system through actual measurement of system operation (an applique product that could initiate phone calls into the network for purposes of measurement), or will be provided directly from the base station electronics.

An example metric is the number of users actively using a sector of the system at any time. This information may be determined through a measurement of the system noise floor. As the number of phone calls rises in any coverage area so does the "noise floor" of the system. This metric can be actively investigated, or passively monitored, by the DSSA system to determine when the noise floor rises to the capacity limit of the electronics associated with that sector of the coverage area. Just prior to when an overloaded condition is about to be experienced, antenna azimuth coverage is adjusted to allow RF resources from another section of the base station to serve customers in a sector of the "about to be overloaded" area. At the same time that azimuth coverage patterns are adjusted to equalize user load, antenna gain is simultaneously manipulated to maintain fixed base station range such that geographical coverage areas are maintained and no "holes" in the network coverage are experienced. This adjustment takes place in real-time on a schedule that supports compensation commensurate with the call access rate of the system so that changes keep up with user demand.

When one portion of the cell is about to experience maximum utilization (defined as call blocking when all available channels are taken), available resources from

5

another portion of the cell are applied through a change in the coverage pattern(s) of the antenna(s) assigned to that cell. RF coverage is modified such that the electronics in each section of the base station are all exposed to the maximum number of users a station can handle. Call blocking only occurs when base station resources have been maximized. Dynamically adjustable azimuth antenna patterns, then, allow for stable range (distance) control in the network so that the number of redundant base stations necessary to compensate for the "breathing cell" phenomenon is significantly reduced or eliminated when basic system capacity is not severely exceeded. In the event that call blocking becomes prevalent in a particular cell, more DSSAs may be applied with more CDMA channels to continue the "cell splitting" function through continued application of more dynamically controlled azimuth antenna systems for additional capacity without the need for acquisition of additional sites or rights-of-way.

In accordance with the present invention, the coverage pattern of a CDMA cell sector is controlled so that it is less susceptible to expansion or contraction, due to the number and location of users serviced, through a technique which dynamically modifies the transmitting and receiving antenna patterns based on the number of users served in each sector. Sectors servicing few users would be allowed to accommodate users from portions of adjacent sectors, in the same cell, through dynamic modification of the antenna coverage patterns in each sector. The antenna pattern for a sector serving a relatively large number of users, for a given cell radius, would contract azimuthally for both transmit and receive functions and decrease both its transmitted output power and received signal sensitivity. This allows coverage of a smaller azimuth area with the same cell radius while maintaining the same performance level, to maintain cell coverage limits. Simultaneously, the adjacent sector (in the same cell) antenna coverage patterns would expand in azimuth (and increase the power and received signal sensitivity) to provide the same cell radius, coverage, and performance level as prior to the pattern modification.

This dynamic antenna pattern modification is accomplished with multi-element, multi-column antennas, whose radiation pattern is controlled dynamically based on the number of users being serviced by that sector, in a cell.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

A more complete understanding of the present invention may be had by reference to the following Detailed Description when taken in conjunction with the accompanying drawings wherein:

FIG. 1(a), FIG. 1(b), and FIG. 1(c) illustrate coverage patterns for a three-sector base station receiver illustrating various load conditions for each sector of the cell;

FIG. 2 is an illustration of the coverage patterns of the three sectors of a base station receiver showing dynamic coverage compensation in accordance with the present invention;

FIG. 3 illustrates a model of a base station of a code division multiple access transmit/receiving system employing 3-DSSAs;

FIG. 4 is a block diagram of the transmit architecture of a dynamic coverage compensated base station in accordance with the present invention;

FIG. 5 is a block diagram of the control box of FIG. 4 illustrating the RF input/outputs and various control and programming signals;

FIG. 6 is a block diagram of the receive architecture for one polarity of a dynamic coverage compensated base station in accordance with the present invention;

6

FIG. 7 is a block diagram of receive architecture of a second polarity (orthogonal to the first polarity) of a dynamic coverage compensated base station in accordance with the present invention; and

FIG. 8 is a processing flow diagram illustrating the program resident in the control box of FIGS. 4, 6, and 7.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

Referring to FIG. 1, there is shown the coverage patterns of the three sectors at a BS (base station) receiver. If it is assumed that each sector can support up to a maximum of 8 mobile stations, then FIG. 1(a) displays lightly loaded cells with less than 8 MS's per sector. In this case all MS achieve target performance without any loss of coverage area. FIG. 1(b) is an illustration of a fully loaded cell with 8 mobile stations per sector, and FIG. 1(c) illustrates sector A having more than its capacity limit, while sectors B and C are under-utilized. The coverage area of sector A contracts to the boundary defined by the area (6-7-8-9) to support the capacity limit of 8 users per sector, which is less than the original area (1-2-3-6). This is the capacity and coverage tradeoff, or the cell breathing phenomenon.

Currently CDMA wireless service providers attempt to limit the interference (in-cell plus out-cell) seen by the serving BS antenna, using directional 120 degree sectored antennas, giving a fixed or static coverage angle for each 120 degree sector. As each 120 degree sector antenna receives only in the direction of one-third of all the MS, the interference is approximately reduced by a factor slightly less than 3. Consequently, the system capacity increases by a factor of 3 and cell breathing is avoided only until the fixed-sector capacity limit is reached. Also, the fixed sectorization improvements are seen only if the interference (i.e., MS's) is uniformly distributed in each sector. This may or may not be the case in practice. This provides only a partial solution to the cell breathing problem.

Power control of MS transmit energy, as mentioned in the introduction, is another key element of almost all existing CDMA systems. However, it is difficult to obtain an accurate estimate of a rapidly changing power level in a time frame that is short compared to the rate of power change (generally a few fractions of a millisecond). Also, the application of power control in CDMA systems necessitates the use of soft handoff for two reasons—(a) when the old and new channels occupy the same frequency band; (b) the MS must be linked at all times to the BS from which it receives the strongest signal and soft handoff can guarantee this. To accommodate soft handoff, CDMA networks are designed such that a given geographic location is covered by two or more BS. This solution is highly inefficient with network resources as the MS has simultaneous traffic channel communication (i.e., phone call) with multiple candidate BS.

Referring to FIG. 2, there is shown an antenna pattern modified in accordance with the present invention to mitigate cell breathing. The coverage area for each of the three sectors of the BS are as follows: Sector A is initially defined by the area (1-2-3-6), Sector B is initially defined by the area (1-6-5-10), and Sector C has an original azimuth covering an area (3-4-5-6). With the addition of three "close in" users to Sector A but without the present invention, the coverage area for Sector A would contract to area (6-7-8-9), see FIG. 1(c), and the three users in area (1-7-8-9-3-2) would be dropped from coverage. In accordance with the present invention, as Sector A becomes overloaded with the three extra mobile stations, the coverage area for Sector A is contracted from area (1-2-3-6), see FIG. 1(c), to area (1-3-10-2), FIG. 2,

while Sector C azimuth has coverage expanded from area (3-4-5-6), see FIG. 1(c), to area (4-5-6-3-10), FIG. 2. Thus, a sector servicing fewer users is adjusted to accommodate users from portions of an adjacent sector in the same cell, thereby dynamically modifying the antenna coverage pattern in each sector. The antenna pattern for Sector A servicing a relatively large number of users, for a given cell radius, is contracted in azimuth for both transmit and receive functions with a decrease in both transmitted output power and received signal sensitivity. This allows coverage of a smaller azimuth area with the same cell radius while maintaining the same performance level and maintaining cell coverage limits.

Referring to FIG. 3, there is illustrated a base station 100 having three sectors each with dual polarization receive antennas 102 and 104 and a signal transmit antenna 106. The receive and transmit antenna of the base station is mounted on a conventional tower with distributed transmit and receive electronics integrated with the antenna elements. The electronics for the transmit antennas include distributed power amplifiers (D-PA) and the electronics for the dual polarization receive antennas include distributed low noise amplifiers (D-LNA) in a circuit configuration to be explained.

Referring to FIG. 4, there is illustrated a block diagram of the transmit portion of the base station 100. As illustrated, the antenna includes multi-element, multi-column panels 108-1, 108-2 through 108-n. The number of panels in the antenna is determined by the design parameters of the base station. Each panel includes multi-row and multi-column elements identified in the figure with the letter "E" followed by a numerical subscript. Connected to each panel of four elements in the panels 108-1 through 108-n is an impedance matching network 110. The number of such impedance matching networks varies with the number of elements in a panel and the number of panels in the antenna. The signals to be transmitted from the antenna 106 are input to the impedance matching networks 110 through control switches 112. For the three panel antenna illustrated in FIG. 4, each group of three control switches 112 are interconnected to a distributed power amplifier 114. The distributed power amplifiers are provided with a gain control input on a line 115 from a sensor and control box 116. The sensor and control box 116 also supplies the RF output signal applied to each of the power amplifiers 114 by means of a connection 118.

Referring to FIG. 5, there is shown the various inputs and outputs for the sensor and control box 116. It should be understood that the sensor and control box 116 includes a programmed computer and is also a component of each of the receive networks. In addition to the signals to the transmit elements of the antennas 106, identified as outputs "RF out", the sensor and control box 116 receives signals from the elements of the receive antennas 102 and 104, identified as inputs "RF in". In addition, the sensor and control box 116 receives input/output control signals, fault detection and isolation control signals. The sensor and control box 116 outputs antenna pattern control signals for the electronics on the tower remote programming inputs from either an external computer or the base station electronics.

Referring again to FIG. 4, the antenna pattern control signals are output from the sensor and control box 116 on lines 120 and applied to each of the control switches 112 to control power to each element of the panels 108-1 through 108-n. By means of the control signals from the sensor and control box 116 applied to the control switches 112, the

antenna pattern of the base station 100 is modifiable in azimuth. For example, the antenna panels 108-1 through 108-n are configured to transmit in 90, 120, or 150 degrees in azimuth. In a preferred configuration, all elements in one of the panels will be connected to corresponding power amplifiers 114 to provide one of the possible antenna azimuth coverage patterns. All elements in each panel will be connected to their corresponding power amplifiers when different panels are selected to effect the desired azimuthal coverage. Finally, with reference to FIG. 4 the RF signal from the base station (not shown) is applied to the sensor and control box 116 by means of a line 122.

Referring to FIGS. 6 and 7, there is shown the system architecture for each of the receive antennas 102 and 104. The architecture for the antennas 102 and 104 is the same except that the elements of one of the receive antennas is positioned to receive signals orthogonally with reference to the second receive antenna. Inasmuch as this is the only difference between the architecture of FIG. 6 and FIG. 7, the same reference numerals will be used for the various components.

Each receive antenna includes multi-element, multi-column panels 122-1 through 122-n. The elements of each antenna panel 122 are grouped in sub-sets (for example, a 4x4 grid of elements) to an impedance matching network 124. To activate each of the sub-sets of elements connected to the impedance matching networks 124, the output of each network is interconnected to a control switch 126. The control switches 126 for each impedance matching network 124 connected to the same sub-set in each of the antenna panels 122-1 through 122-n are interconnected to a distributed low noise amplifier 128. Each of the low noise amplifiers 128 has an output interconnected over a line 130 to the sensor and control box 116. In addition, each of the low noise amplifiers 128 is provided with a gain control adjusted by a power control signal on a line 132 from the sensor and control box 116.

RF signals received by the elements of the antenna panels 122-1 through 122-n are output from the sensor and control box 116 on lines 134 to the base station (not shown). Also output from the sensor and control box 116 are antenna pattern control signals on lines 136 connected to each of the control switches 126. As previously mentioned, the system architecture for each of the receive antennas 102 and 104 is similar. The receive antennas 102 and 104 are also functionally similar.

The DSSA of the present invention will operate in either integrated or applique form (with respect to a base station), and is based on a determination of the number of users in each sector. The number of users may be determined either directly through information available from the base station, or indirectly by monitoring the system load (number of users) with a CDMA phone function included along with the antenna array processing. The CDMA phone function would be used to periodically make a phone call into the CDMA network, using an antenna mounted inside the sector antenna system. This periodic phone call would be used to measure system load through a measurement of the averaged received bit error rate (BER), which is a function of the received signal to noise ratio (SNR). The received BER is determined by comparing the received signal with it's associated transmitted data pattern (which is known because it was initiated by the CDMA phone function inside the smart antenna). For a given number of users in the sector, the BER (or range of BER) at a given signal strength is well known. Consequently, this relationship is exploited for use as the determining factor for the number of users being

serviced at any time. As more or fewer users are serviced by the sector, the cross-correlation noise floor will rise or fall accordingly, thus affecting the system performance, i.e., the system noise floor, system power control adjustments, and therefore the BER. The resultant increase or decrease in BER, or changes in system power control setting, provides an excellent, dynamic, indication of system resource loading. These indicators would be inputs to calculate a metric for modifying antenna patterns in each sector in response to a change in traffic density serviced by that sector and the entire cell.

Referring to FIG. 8, there is illustrated a flow chart for describing the basic operation of a dynamically sectored smart antenna (DSSA). The number of mobile stations active in any of the Sectors A, B, or C (see FIG. 3) of a cell is determined by measuring the system noise floor as input to the base station electronics. Thus, the broadband measurement 138 determines the level of system loading or utilization (or if the system is exclusively comprised of voice users it is a reflection of the number of users of any sector) of the base station 100 of FIG. 3. The level of the system noise floor in any one sector is directly proportional to the number of MS signals received at the BS. As more or fewer mobile stations are serviced by the base station, the noise floor will rise or fall accordingly. This provides an excellent and dynamic measurement for the DSSA system to determine the system utilization in each sector. The sensor and control box 116 includes a programmed computer that runs the supervisory algorithm that utilizes the noise floor measurement of each sector as an input to generate antenna pattern modification control signals on lines 136 for the receive antennas and lines 120 for the transmit antenna. Utilizing the noise floor measurement, the algorithm performs an acceptable/balanced evaluation 140 to determine if the user load of the system is acceptable and balanced in all sectors. Following this acceptable/balanced evaluation 140, the processing flow responds to a "yes" determination by advancing to a time delay 142 and at the conclusion of the time-out the process returns to re-run the broadband noise measurement 138.

An unacceptable or unbalanced response at the evaluation 140 advances the processing flow to evaluate if the patterns of all the sectors can be balanced as to mobile station users. Following a positive response to a modification evaluation 144, the sensor and control box 116 generates azimuth pattern adjustment signals during a subroutine 146. The antenna pattern for a sector serving a relatively large number of users would contract in azimuth for both the transmit and receive functions, while simultaneously decreasing the transmitted output power and receive signal sensitivity. Antenna gain adjustment in a sub-routine 148 maintains the target range of coverage and mitigates the cell breathing effect. While the antenna pattern for a sector serving a relatively large number of users is contracted, the adjacent sector (in the same cell) has the antenna pattern covering expanded in azimuth, while simultaneously increasing the transmit power and received signal sensitivity to maintain the total cell coverage prior to the pattern modification. This basic operation is illustrated in FIG. 2 as previously explained. Following the azimuth pattern adjustment 146 and the gain adjustment 148, the algorithm run by the programmed computer of the sensor and control box 116 enters a time delay 150. At the conclusion of the time delay the process returns to re-run the noise measurement 138.

When modification of patterns to balance the users cannot be achieved, the process flow advances to increment a counter 152. When a determination is made that the patterns

cannot be modified, a condition that exists when the system capacity limit is reached and the resources cannot be balanced, a predetermined time delay is activated at 154. At the conclusion of the time delay, the process returns to re-run the noise measurement 138. A sub-routine activates a counter, the threshold of which is evaluated by a threshold determining inquiry 156 following incrementing of the counter. If the counter threshold evaluation 156 produces a positive response, then the algorithm run by the programmed computer of the control box enters a sub-routine 158 to maintain the patterns of each of the sectors return to rerun the noise measurement 138. This triggers incrementing a counter to log a cell breathing event during an increment evaluation 160.

By operation of the supervisory algorithm in the programmed computer of the sensor and control box 116, the patterns of each sector of the base station 100 are adjusted both in azimuth and in range. The adjustment for range is to maintain a designed cell range as the patterns are adjusted in azimuth.

Although several embodiments of the present invention have been described in the foregoing detailed description and illustrated in the accompanying drawings, it will be understood by those skilled in the art that the invention is not limited to the embodiments disclosed, but is capable of numerous rearrangements, substitutions and modifications without departing from the spirit of the invention.

We claim:

1. A CDMA multi-cell communication system having a base station transmitting RF signals to at least one mobile station and receiving RF signals from at least one mobile station, comprising:

a multi-element transmit antenna for each of a plurality of sectors of a cell;

a multi-element receive antenna for each of the plurality of sectors of a cell, the multi-element receive antenna co-located with the multi-element transmit antenna;

a plurality of control switches, one control switch connected to designated elements of the receive antenna; means for interconnecting the plurality control switches in groups, each group of control switches connected to similarly positioned designated elements of the receive antenna;

a plurality of adjustable gain control circuits for adjusting the energy for the receive antenna, each adjustable gain control circuit connected to one of the groups of control switches; and

a controller connected to the plurality of adjustable gain control circuits and the plurality of control switches and generating control signals for adjusting the receive antenna pattern of each sector of the cell in azimuth and adjusting the receive antenna energy to maintain substantially the equivalent range coverage for each adjustment of the receive antenna pattern in azimuth.

2. The CDMA multi-cell communication system as set forth in claim 1 wherein each adjustable gain control circuit comprises an amplifier having one terminal connected to the means for interconnecting and a second terminal connected to said controller, each amplifier adjusted in gain by a control signal from said controller.

3. A CDMA multi-cell communication system as set forth in claim 1 wherein said multi-element receive antenna comprises a first receive antenna of a plurality of elements of a first polarity and a second receive antenna of a plurality of elements of a second polarity, the second polarity orthogonal to the first polarity.

11

4. A CDMA multi-cell communication system as set forth in claim 3 when said controller comprises a processor executing a program for measuring the number of mobile stations active in each cell of the multi-cell communication system.

5. A CDMA multi-cell communication system as set forth in claim 1 further comprising a plurality of impedance matching networks, one impedance matching network connected to one of the plurality of control switches and to the interconnected designated elements.

6. Apparatus for adaptive azimuth receive pattern control in a CDMA multi-cell communication system transmitting RF signals to at least one mobile station and receiving RF signals from at least one mobile station, each cell having a multi-sector receive antenna, comprising:

a plurality of control switches, one control switch connected to one sector on the multi-sector, multi-element receive antenna;

a plurality of adjustable gain control circuits for adjusting the energy of each sector of the receive antenna, each adjustable gain control circuit individually connected to one sector of the multi-sector antenna; and

a controller connected to the plurality of adjustable gain control circuits and the plurality of control switches and generating control signals for adjusting the receive antenna pattern of each sector in azimuth and for adjusting the receive antenna energy to maintain substantially the equivalent range of coverage area for each adjustment of the receive antenna pattern in azimuth.

7. Apparatus for adaptive pattern control as set forth in claim 6 wherein each adjustable gain control circuit comprises an adjustable gain amplifier having one terminal connected to one of the plurality of control switches and another terminal connected to said controller.

8. Apparatus for adaptive pattern control as set forth in claim 6 wherein said controller comprises a processor running a program for measuring the number of mobile stations active in each cell of the multi-sector receive antenna.

9. Apparatus for adaptive pattern control as set forth in claim 8 wherein the program run by the processor of said controller determines an acceptable load level and load balance for each sector of the multi-sector receive antenna.

10. Apparatus for adaptive pattern control as set forth in claim 9 wherein the program run by the processor of said controller generates control signals to adjust the receive antenna pattern in azimuth and the receive antenna energy to

12

maintain substantially the equivalent range coverage area for each adjustment of the receive antenna pattern in azimuth.

11. Apparatus for adaptive pattern control as set forth in claim 6 further comprising a plurality of impedance matching networks, one impedance matching network connected to one of the plurality of control switches and one sector of the multi-sector receive antenna.

12. A method for adaptive pattern control of a receive antenna in a multi-cell communication system, comprising:

measuring the number of mobile stations active in each sector of a multi-sector base station;

determining the load level for each sector of the base station;

in response to a determination of the load level, determining the availability to adjust the pattern of a receive antenna in azimuth and to adjust the antenna energy to maintain a substantially equivalent range coverage;

adjusting the receive antenna pattern of a sector in azimuth in response to a determination that the load level of a sector exceeds a pre-selected value;

adjusting the level of the receive antenna energy for each sector of the base station to maintain substantially the equivalent range coverage for each adjustment of the receive antenna pattern in azimuth;

incrementing a counter in response to a determination that the patterns of the receive antennas of the multi-sector base station cannot be adjusted;

determining the counter level for comparison to a threshold level; and

in response to a counter level below the threshold level, re-measuring the number of mobile stations active in each sector after a predetermined time interval.

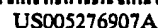
13. The method of adaptive pattern control as set forth in claim 12 further comprising:

in response to the counter exceeding the threshold, readjusting the pattern in azimuth and the antenna energy to return to a pattern for each sector as established during initiation of the communication system.

14. A method for adaptive pattern control as set forth in claim 13 further comprising:

incrementing a breathing event counter in response to returning to the pattern for each sector as established on initiation of a communication system.

* * * * *



[11] Patent Number: 5,276,907

[45] **Date of Patent:** Jan. 4, 1994

- Primary Examiner—**Reinhard J. Eisenzopf
Assistant Examiner—Philip J. Sobutka
Attorney, Agent, or Firm—Shawn B. Dempster

[57] **ABSTRACT**

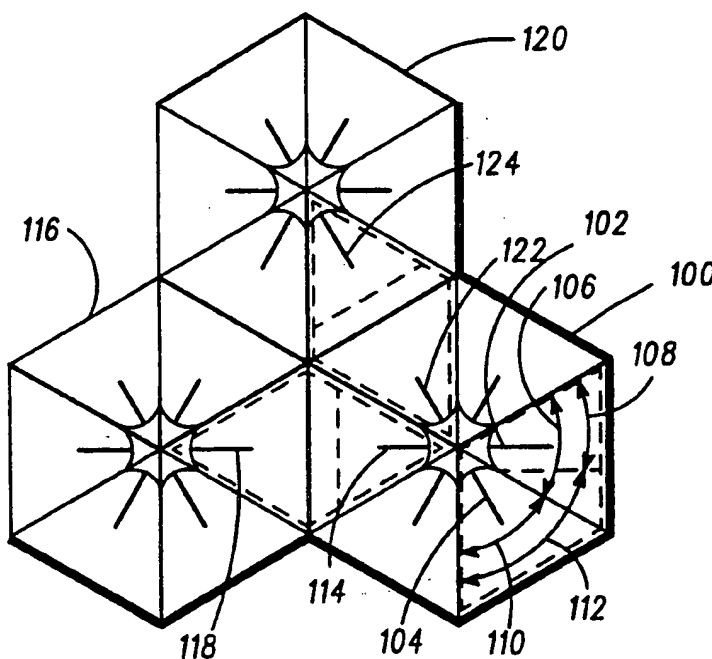
- A method and apparatus is provided for dynamic distribution of a communication channel load in a sectorized cellular radio communication system. The channel load is distributed by narrowing a first sector antenna beamwidth of an overloaded sector of a cell site and widening a second sector antenna beamwidth of an adjacent sector of the cell site and subsequently handing off subscriber units previously in the first sector antenna beamwidth. Alternatively, channel load is distributed by reducing power of a sector or omni-directional antenna which is adjacent to an overloaded antenna, if the channel from an overloaded antenna to an antenna of a subscriber unit is overloaded due to interference. Subsequent to the occurrence of the channel interference condition, subscriber units are handed off to the particular antenna which is best able to service the subscriber units.**

[56] **References Cited**

U.S. PATENT DOCUMENTS

- | | | | |
|-----------|--------|-------------------|----------|
| 4,249,181 | 2/1981 | Lee | 455/33.3 |
| 4,435,840 | 3/1984 | Kojima | 455/56 |
| 4,751,725 | 6/1988 | Bonta et al. | 455/33.3 |

12 Claims, 1 Drawing Sheet



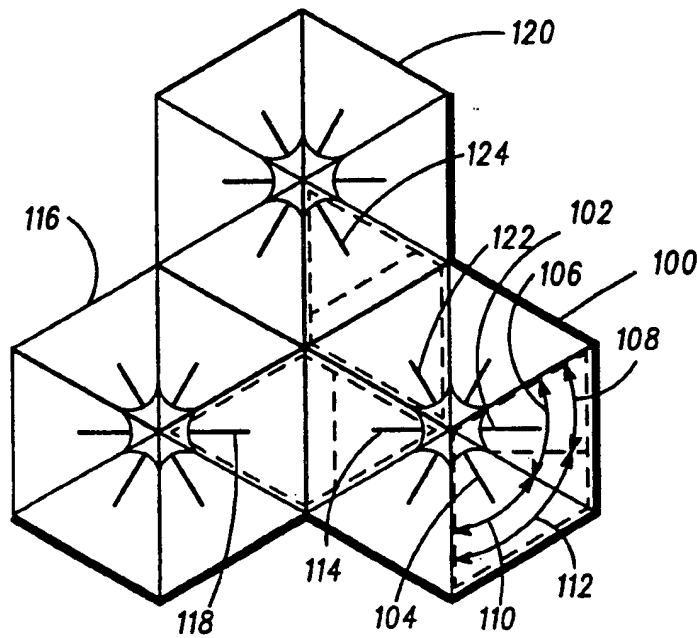


FIG. 1

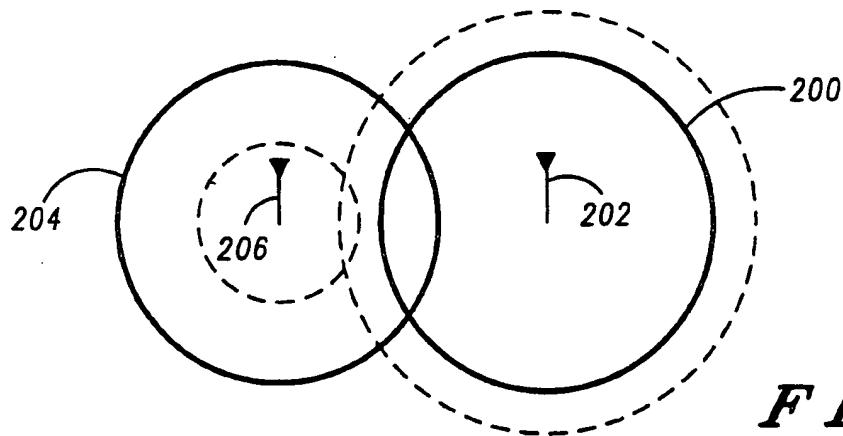


FIG. 2

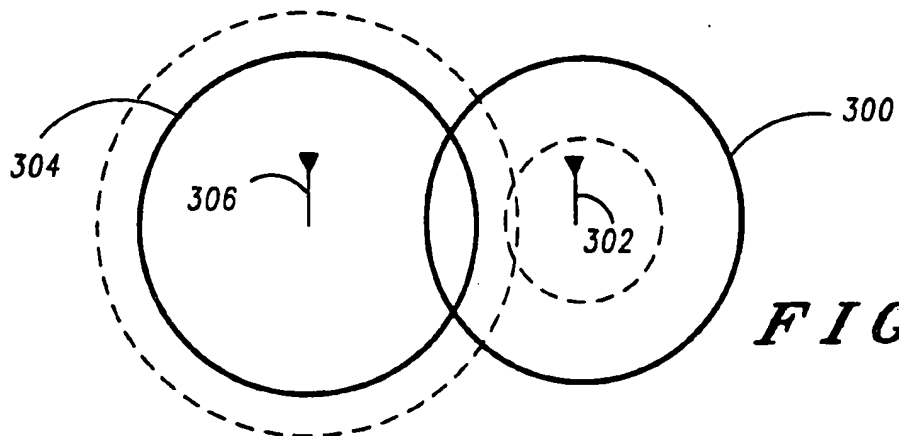


FIG. 3

METHOD AND APPARATUS FOR DYNAMIC DISTRIBUTION OF A COMMUNICATION CHANNEL LOAD IN A CELLULAR RADIO COMMUNICATION SYSTEM

FIELD OF THE INVENTION

The present invention relates to communication systems which employ spread-spectrum signals and, more particularly, to a method and apparatus for dynamically distributing communication channel load in a cellular radio communication system.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

In general, the purpose of a communication system is to transmit information-bearing signals from a source, located at one point, to a user destination, located at another point some distance away. A communication system generally consists of three basic components: transmitter, channel, and receiver. The transmitter has the function of processing the message signal into a form suitable for transmission over the channel. This processing of the message signal is referred to as modulation. The function of the channel is to provide a physical connection between the transmitter output and the receiver input. The function of the receiver is to process the received signal so as to produce an estimate of the original message signal. This processing of the received signal is referred to as demodulation.

Two types of two-way communication channels exist, namely, point-to point channels and point-to-multipoint channels. Examples of point-to-point channels include wirelines (e.g., local telephone transmission), microwave links, and optical fibers. In contrast, point-to-multipoint channels provide a capability where many receiving stations may be reached simultaneously from a single transmitter (e.g. cellular radio telephone communication systems). These point-to-multipoint systems are also termed Multiple Address Systems (MAS).

In any communication system, there are two primary communication resources to be employed, namely, average transmitted power and channel bandwidth. The average transmitted power is the average power of the transmitted signal. The channel bandwidth defines the range of frequencies that the channel can handle for the transmission of signals with satisfactory fidelity. A general system design objective is to use these two resources as efficiently as possible. In most channels, one resource may be considered more important than the other. Hence, we may also classify communication channels as power-limited or band-limited. For example, the telephone circuit is a typical band-limited channel, whereas a deep-space communication link or a satellite channel is typically power-limited.

The transmitted power is important because, for a receiver of prescribed noise figure, it determines the allowable separation between the transmitter and receiver. In other words, for a receiver of prescribed noise figure and a prescribed distance between it and the transmitter, the available transmitted power determines the signal-to-noise ratio at the receiver input. This, subsequently, determines the noise performance of the receiver. Unless performance exceeds a certain design level, the transmission of message signals over the channel is not considered to be satisfactory.

Additionally, channel bandwidth is important because, for a prescribed band of frequencies characterizing a message signal, the channel bandwidth determines

the number of such message signals that can be multiplexed over the channel. In other words, for a prescribed number of independent message signals that have to share a common channel, the channel bandwidth determines the band of frequencies that may be allotted to the transmission of each message signal without discernible distortion.

Analog and digital transmission methods are used to transmit a message signal over a communication channel. The use of digital methods offers several operational advantages over analog methods, including but not limited to: increased immunity to channel noise and interference, flexible operation of the system, common format for the transmission of different kinds of message signals, improved security of communication through the use of encryption, and increased capacity.

These advantages are attained at the cost of increased system complexity. However, through the use of very large-scale integration (VLSI) technology, a cost-effective way of building the hardware has been developed.

One digital transmission method that may be used for the transmission of message signals over a communication channel is pulse-code modulation (PCM). In PCM, the message signal is sampled, quantized, and then encoded. The sampling operation permits representation of the message signal by a sequence of samples taken at uniformly-spaced instants of time. Quantization trims the amplitude of each sample to the nearest value selected from a finite set of representation levels. The combination of sampling and quantization permits the use of a code (e.g., binary code) for the transmission of a message signal. Other forms of digital transmission use similar methods to transmit message signals over a communication channel.

When message signals are digitally transmitted over a band-limited channel, a form of interference known as intersymbol interference may result. The effect of intersymbol interference, if left uncontrolled, is to severely limit the rate at which digital data may be transmitted without error over the channel. The cure for controlling the effects of intersymbol interference may be controlled by carefully shaping the transmitted pulse representing a binary symbol 1 or 0.

Further, to transmit a message signal (either analog or digital) over a band-pass communication channel, the message signal must be manipulated into a form suitable for efficient transmission over the channel. Modification of the message signal is achieved by means of a process termed modulation. This process involves varying some parameter of a carrier wave in accordance with the message signal in such a way that the spectrum of the modulated wave matches the assigned channel bandwidth. Correspondingly, the receiver is required to recreate the original message signal from a degraded version of the transmitted signal after propagation through the channel. The re-creation is accomplished by using a process known as demodulation, which is the inverse of the modulation process used in the transmitter.

In addition to providing efficient transmission, there are other reasons for performing modulation. In particular, the use of modulation permits multiplexing, that is, the simultaneous transmission of signals from several message sources over a common channel. Also, modulation may be used to convert the message signal into a form less susceptible to noise and interference.

For multiplexed communication systems, the system typically consists of many remote units (i.e. subscriber units) which require active service over a communication channel for short or discrete intervals of time rather than continuous service on a communication channel at all times. Therefore, communication systems have been designed to incorporate the characteristic of communicating with many remote units for brief intervals of time on the same communication channel. These systems are termed multiple access communication systems.

One type of multiple access communication system is a frequency division multiple access (FDMA) system. In an FDMA system, the communication channel is divided into several narrow frequency bands. Individual communication channel links are established between two communication units within one of these narrow frequency bands. These communication links are maintained for discrete amounts of time while the two communication units transmit and receive signals. During particular communication links between the two communication units, the communication system does not allow other communication units access to the narrow frequency band within the communication channel which is being utilized by the communication units in the particular communication link.

Another type of multiple access communication system is a time division multiple access (TDMA) system. In a TDMA system, the communication channel is divided into time slices of a time frame to allow communication links between two communication units to exist in the same communication channel simultaneously, but at different time slices. This is accomplished by assigning particular time slices of a time frame to a particular communication link and other time slices to other communication links. During these particular communication links between the two communication units, the communication system does not allow other communication units access to the time slice of the time frame within the communication channel which is being utilized by the communication units in the particular communication link.

Further, another type of multiple access communication system is a spread spectrum system. In a spread spectrum system, a modulation technique is utilized in which a transmitted signal is spread over a wide frequency band within the communication channel. The frequency band is much wider than the minimum bandwidth required to transmit the information being sent. A voice signal, for example, can be sent with amplitude modulation (AM) in a bandwidth only twice that of the information itself. Other forms of modulation, such as low deviation frequency modulation (FM) or single sideband AM, also permit information to be transmitted in a bandwidth comparable to the bandwidth of the information itself. However, in a spread spectrum system, the modulation of a signal to be transmitted often includes taking a baseband signal (e.g., a voice channel) with a bandwidth of only a few kilohertz, and distributing the signal to be transmitted over a frequency band that may be many megahertz wide. This is accomplished by modulating the signal to be transmitted with the information to be sent and with a wideband encoding signal.

Unlike FDMA and TDMA systems, in spread spectrum systems a signal may be transmitted in a channel in which the noise power is higher than the signal power. The modulation and demodulation of the message signal using spread spectrum techniques provides a

signal-to-noise gain which enables the recovery of the message signal from a noisy communication channel. The greater the signal-to-noise ratio for a given system equates to: (1) the smaller the bandwidth required to transmit a message signal with a low rate of error or (2) the lower the average transmitted power required to transmit a message signal with a low rate of error over a given bandwidth.

Three general types of spread spectrum communication techniques exist, including:

The modulation of a carrier by a digital code sequence whose bit rate is much higher than the information signal bandwidth. Such systems are referred to as "direct sequence" modulated systems.

Carrier frequency shifting in discrete increments in a pattern dictated by a code sequence. These systems are called "frequency hoppers". The transmitter jumps from frequency to frequency within some predetermined set; the order of frequency usage is determined by a code sequence. Similarly "time hopping" and "time-frequency hopping" have times of transmission which are regulated by a code sequence.

Pulse-FM or "chirp" modulation in which a carrier is swept over a wide band during a given pulse interval.

Information (i.e. the message signal) can be embedded in the spectrum signal by several methods. One method is to add the information to the spreading code before it is used for spreading modulation. This technique can be used in direct sequence and frequency hopping systems. It will be noted that the information being sent must be in a digital form prior to adding it to the spreading code because the combination of the spreading code, typically a binary code, involves module-2 addition. Alternatively, the information or message signal may be used to modulate a carrier before spreading it.

Thus, a spread spectrum system must have two properties: (1) the transmitted bandwidth should be much greater than the bandwidth or rate of the information being sent and (2) some function other than the information being sent is employed to determine the resulting modulated channel bandwidth.

The essence of the spread spectrum communication involves the art of expanding the bandwidth of a signal, transmitting the expanded signal and recovering the desired signal by remapping the received spread spectrum into the original information bandwidth. Furthermore, in the process of carrying out this series of bandwidth trades, the purpose of spread spectrum techniques is to allow the system to deliver error-free information in a noisy signal environment.

Spread spectrum communication systems can be multiple access systems like FDMA and TDMA communication systems. One type of multiple access spread spectrum system is a code division multiple access (CDMA) system. In a CDMA system, communication between two communication units is accomplished by spreading each transmitted signal over the frequency band of the communication channel with a unique user spreading code. As a result, transmitted signals are in the same frequency band of the communication channel and are separated only by unique user spreading codes. Particular transmitted signals are retrieved from the communication channel by despreading a signal representative of the sum of signals in the communication channel with a

user spreading code related to the particular transmitted signal which is to be retrieved from the communication channel. A CDMA system may use direct sequence or frequency-hopping spreading techniques.

Each of these multiple access systems (i.e. FDMA, TDMA, and CDMA) can be utilized in cellular radio communication systems. In cellular radio communication systems, factors which limit the performance of system are distortion and noise. Typically, in propagating through a communication channel, a transmitted signal is distorted because of nonlinearities and imperfections in the frequency response of the communication channel. Other sources of degradation are noise and interference picked up by the signal during the course of transmission through the communication channel.

There are various sources of noise in a CDMA spread spectrum communication system. The sources of noise may be internal as well as external to the communication system. In CDMA, the majority of noise in the communication channel is from signals which are being transmitted with unique user spreading codes. These spread signals contribute to the overall noise in the communication channel.

To limit the noise in cellular communication systems as well as increase the capacity of the cellular communication systems, reuse the available but limited number of communication resources. To ensure the re-use of communication resources does not cause unacceptable noise in the communication channel, cell sites, which are allocated the same communication resources, are geographically separated. By having sufficient geographic separation, the noise in the communication channel is limited. However, the geographic separation needed to ensure an adequate signal-to-noise ratio (negligible noise in the communication channel) limits the capacity of the communication system because not all of the available communication resources may be used in each cell site.

To enhance the efficiency of communication resource re-use and to improve capacity of the cellular system, the cell sites can be divided into sectors, wherein each sector contains a percentage of the available communication resources. By having the cell sites divided into sectors, the required geographic separation may be reduced while maintaining an adequate signal-to-noise ratio. For example, U.S. Pat. No. 4,128,740, assigned to Motorola, Inc., discloses a four cell-six sector communication resource re-use pattern. As disclosed, each cell site is divided into six sectors and each sector contains approximately 1/24 of the available communication resources. For every four cell sites, the communication resource pattern is repeated. This communication resource re-use pattern may be further reduced to a one cell site re-use pattern as disclosed in pending U.S. application Ser. No. 07/459,624 which was filed Jan. 2, 1990 and is also assigned to Motorola Inc.

However, in a CDMA spread spectrum communication system, most of the noise in the communication channel in a particular cell site is from signals which are being transmitted with unique user spreading codes within that particular cell site. Thus, a one cell site reuse pattern is possible if the noise from cell sites surrounding the particular cell site is ignored. The total number of communication links that a particular cell site can simultaneously handle is related to the noise in the communication channel which is from sources external to

the system. The use of this one site reuse pattern will limit the capacity of the communication system in this particular cell site to handle communication links, since noise from adjacent cell sites will be considered a part of the external noise for the particular cell site.

The present invention enhances the capability of spread-spectrum systems and, in particular, CDMA cellular radio-telephone systems to handle unequal channel loading of cells. In CDMA cellular radio-telephone systems, the "users" are in the same frequency band and separated only by unique spreading codes. The number of users that can use the same frequency band is limited by the noise interference level. The noise interference level is directly related to the interference level created by the users actively using the frequency band and nearby cell sites operating in the same frequency band. The present invention dynamically changes the noise level present in a frequency band and the communication channel load of individual cell sites to increase the capacity of the communication system.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

A method and apparatus is provided for dynamic distribution of a communication channel load in a sectorized cellular radio communication system having sector antennae, each sector antenna having a beamwidth and a beamlength. The channel load is distributed by narrowing a first sector antenna beamwidth of an overloaded sector of a cell site and widening a second sector antenna beamwidth of an adjacent sector of the cell site and subsequently handing off subscriber units previously in the first sector antenna beamwidth.

An alternative method apparatus is provided for dynamic distribution of communication load in a radio communication system. The channel load is distributed by reducing power of an antenna which is adjacent to an overloaded antenna, if the channel from an antenna of the overloaded cell site to an antenna of a subscriber unit is overloaded due to interference. Subsequent to the occurrence of the channel interference condition, the subscriber units in the overloaded cell site are handed off to the particular cell site which is best able to service the subscriber units. This alternative method and apparatus can be applied to sectorized cell sites or cell sites having omni-directional antennae.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

FIG. 1 is a diagram showing a preferred embodiment set of sectorized cells of a radio communication system.

FIG. 2 is a diagram showing an alternative preferred embodiment of cells of a radio communication system.

FIG. 3 is a diagram showing an alternative preferred embodiment of cells of a radio communication system.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Typically in cellular radio communication systems, the coverage area of the communication systems is assumed to have equal distribution of channel load throughout the system. However, in reality, most subscriber units are not equally distributed throughout the cellular radio communication system and as such the channel load is not equally distributed. For example, cars having subscriber units are on freeways during rush hours. Because freeways are located in limited portions of the cell sites in a radio communication system, the location of subscriber units which desire service from cell sites during a particular period of time is limited to particular cell sites having freeways within their bound-

aries. As a result, unequal cell site channel loading occurs. Or more particularly, one or more cell sites are more heavily loaded than surrounding cell sites.

In the preferred embodiment, CDMA spread spectrum communication systems having one cell frequency reuse patterns are used. However, the present invention may be used by other types of communication systems other than the preferred embodiment without departing from the teachings of the present invention disclosure. In a spread spectrum system, because the system is interference limited, the capacity of a particular cell site is related in part to the amount of interference being contributed to the particular cell site from surrounding cell sites and subscriber units in the particular cell site. It is desirable to dynamically distribute the communication channel load among the cell sites such that some of the channel load from overloaded cell sites is assigned to the neighboring cell sites. This can be accomplished through the use of a number of different techniques.

In one preferred embodiment, shown in FIG. 1, a beamwidth pattern 106 of an antenna 102 of an overloaded spread spectrum cell sector is narrowed to a reduced beamwidth pattern 108. In conjunction with this narrowing of an antenna beamwidth pattern, a beamwidth pattern 110 of an antenna 104 of an adjacent cell sector is widened to an increased beamwidth pattern 112. Subscriber units which were in the beamwidth patterns of antennae 102 and 104 will be handed off automatically to the antenna best able to provide a communication channel to the individual subscriber unit. This handing off of subscriber units can be done by mechanisms already known in the art or any other suitable communication link handoff mechanism.

Handoff can be defined as the process of transferring a transmission in progress between one cell site and a subscriber unit to another cell site in coordination with both cell sites and the subscriber unit. Present radio communication systems require that the system continuously monitor the quality of every transmission in the communication channel. The system recognizes when the quality of a transmission in the channel falls below a predetermined threshold in a particular cell site and determines if other cell sites can satisfactorily handle the transmission. Once a more suitable cell site is identified, the system sends instructions to the subscriber unit directing it to use another communication channel for the current transmission. The subscriber unit confirms that it is leaving its current channel, switches to the new channel, synchronizes to the new channel and begins transmitting in the new channel.

The effect of this narrowing and widening of antenna beamwidth patterns is to transfer communication channel load from the overloaded cell sector to an adjacent cell sector which is able to handle an increased communication channel load.

In an alternative embodiment, a sector of cell 100 is overloaded by interference in the communication channel link from an antenna 122 of the overloaded cell sector to an antenna of a subscriber unit. This interference in the communication channel link comes from cell sites operating in the same frequency band as the overloaded sector cell as well as other sources. The overloaded sector cell initiates a request to an adjacent sector of an adjacent cell 120 to reduce its power at the antenna 124 servicing the adjacent cell sector. Alternatively, other sectors of cell 100 can be considered adjacent sectors and as such may reduce their power as a result of a request by the overloaded sector cell. This

reduction in the antenna 124 power effectively reduces the full capacity geographic boundaries of the sector serviced by the antenna 124 in conventional radio communication systems (e.g. two-way trunking, ultra high frequency (UHF), very high frequency (VHF) radio communication systems). However, spread spectrum communication systems are not power limited, but rather are interference limited. Thus, the reduction of power at antenna 124 will not necessarily reduce the geographic boundaries or channel capacity of the cell sector serviced by antenna 124. If this reduced antenna power cell sector is not operating near full capacity, then the antenna 124 and associated receiver can still recover transmissions between antennae of subscriber units and the antenna 124 of the reduced power cell sector which are in the communication channel at a reduced power. However, this reduction in power of antenna 124 will reduce the interference in the communication channel link between an antenna of a subscriber unit to antenna 122 of the overloaded sector of cell 100. Thus, the communication channel capacity of the overloaded sector of cell 100 is increased. Also, subscriber units which were transmitting through the communication channel to antennae 122 and 124 will be handed off automatically to the antenna best able to provide a communication channel to the individual subscriber unit after this reduction in power at antenna 124. This handing off of subscriber units can be done by mechanisms already known in the art and briefly described above or any other suitable communication link handoff mechanism.

This same technique of power reduction can be utilized by cells which do not have sectorized regions serviced by sectorized antenna. FIG. 2 show a diagram of such an alternative preferred embodiment of cells of a radio communication system. In this alternative embodiment, a cell 200 is overloaded by interference in the communication channel link from an antenna 202 of the overloaded cell 200 to an antenna of a subscriber unit. This interference in the communication channel link comes from cell sites operating in the same frequency band as the overloaded cell site as well as other sources. The overloaded cell 200 initiates a request to an adjacent cell 204 to reduce its power at the antenna 206 servicing the adjacent cell 204. This reduction in the antenna 206 power effectively reduces the full capacity geographic boundaries of the cell 204 serviced by the antenna 206 in traditional radio communication systems. However, as previously described, spread spectrum communication systems are not power limited, but rather are interference limited. Thus, the reduction of power at antenna 206 will not necessarily reduce the geographic boundaries or channel capacity of the cell 204 serviced by antenna 206. If this reduced antenna power cell 204 is not operating near full capacity, then the antenna 206 and associated receiver can still recover transmissions between antennae of subscriber units and the antenna 206 of the reduced power cell 204 which are in the communication channel at a reduced power. However, this reduction in power of antenna 204 will reduce the interference in the communication channel link between an antenna of a subscriber unit to antenna 202 of the overloaded cell 200. Thus, the communication channel capacity of the overloaded cell 200 is increased. Also, subscriber units which were transmitting through the communication channel to antennae 202 and 206 will be handed off automatically to the antenna best able to provide a communication channel to the

individual subscriber unit after this reduction in power at antenna 206. This handing off of subscriber units can be done by mechanisms already known in the art and briefly described above or any other suitable communication link handoff mechanism.

Similarly in an alternative embodiment, a sector of cell 100 is overloaded by interference in the communication channel link from an antenna of a subscriber unit to an antenna 114 of the overloaded cell sector. This interference in the communication channel link comes from subscriber units in the overloaded sector cell which are operating in the same frequency band as the overloaded sector cell as well as other sources. The overloaded sector cell initiates a request to an adjacent sector of an adjacent cell 116 to increase its power at the antenna 118 servicing the adjacent cell sector. Alternatively, other sectors of cell 100 can be considered adjacent sectors and as such may increase their power as a result of a request by the overloaded sector cell. The increase in power of antenna 118 in the adjacent sector will cause the subscriber units being serviced by the antenna 118 to determine that the communication channel link has improved with the antenna 118 since the signals being received from the increased power antenna 118 have improved due to their increased power. As a result of this perceived improvement in the communication channel link, the subscriber units in the adjacent sector cell will reduce their respective transmit power to the antenna 118. This reduction in transmit power of the subscriber units in the adjacent sector cell will reduce the interference at the antenna 114. In addition, this increase in the antenna 118 power effectively increases the full capacity geographic boundaries of the sector serviced by the antenna 118. The increase of power at antenna 118 actually will reduce the geographic boundaries or channel capacity of the cell sector serviced by antenna 114. This increased power of antenna 118 will allow the cell sector serviced by this increased power antenna 118 to recover transmissions in the communication channel which were formerly serviced by antenna 114, thereby effectively reducing the service area for antenna 114 and relieving channel load capacity of the overloaded sector of cell 100. The subscriber units which were transmitting through the communication channel to antennae 114 and 118 will be handed off automatically to the antenna best able to provide a communication channel to the individual subscriber unit after this increase in power at antenna 118. This handing off of subscriber units can be done by mechanisms already known in the art and briefly described above or any other suitable communication link handoff mechanism.

This same technique of power reduction can be utilized by cells which do not have sectorized regions serviced by sectorized antenna. FIG. 3 show a diagram of such an alternative preferred embodiment of cells of a radio communication system. In this alternative embodiment, a cell 300 is overloaded by interference in the communication channel link from an antenna of a subscriber unit to an antenna 302 of the overloaded cell 300. This interference in the communication channel link comes from subscriber units in the overloaded cell site which are operating in the same frequency band as the overloaded cell site as well as other sources. The overloaded cell 300 initiates a request to an adjacent cell 304 to increase its power at the antenna 306 servicing the adjacent cell 304. The increase in power of antenna 306 in the adjacent cell 304 will cause the subscriber

units being serviced by the antenna 306 to determine that the communication channel link has improved with the antenna 306, since the signals being received from the increased power antenna 306 have improved due to their increased power. As a result of this perceived improvement in the communication channel link, the subscriber units in the adjacent cell 304 will reduce their respective transmit power to the antenna 306. This reduction in transmit power of the subscriber units in the adjacent cell 304 will reduce the interference at the antenna 302. In addition, this increase in the antenna 306 effectively increases the geographic boundaries of the cell 304 serviced by the antenna 306. The increase of power at antenna 306 actually will reduce the geographic boundaries or channel capacity of the cell 300 serviced by antenna 302. This increased power of antenna 306 will allow the cell 304 service by this increased power antenna 306 to recover transmissions in the communication channel which were formerly serviced by antenna 302, thereby effectively reducing the service area for antenna 302 and relieving channel load capacity of the overloaded cell 300. The subscriber units which were transmitting through the communication channel to antennae 302 and 306 will be handed off automatically to the antenna best able to provide a communication channel to the individual subscriber unit after this increase in power at antenna 306. This handing off of subscriber units can be done by mechanisms already known in the art and briefly described above or any other suitable communication link handoff mechanism.

Although the invention has been described and illustrated with a certain degree of particularity, it is understood that the present disclosure of embodiments has been made by way of example only and that numerous changes in the arrangement and combination of parts as well as steps may be resorted to by those skilled in the art without departing from the spirit and scope of the invention as claimed.

What is claimed is:

1. A method of dynamic distribution of communication channel load in a sectorized cellular radio communication system having sector antennae, each sector antenna having a beamwidth and a beamlength, comprising:
 - (a) narrowing a first sector antenna beamwidth of an overloaded sector of a cell of the radio communication system;
 - (b) widening a second sector antenna beamwidth of an adjacent sector of the cell of the radio communication system; and
 - (c) automatically handing off subscriber units which were previously in the first sector antenna beamwidth.
2. The method of claim 1 wherein the radio communication system comprises a spread-spectrum radio communication system.
3. A method of dynamic distribution of communication channel load in a radio communication system, comprising:
 - (a) reducing power of an antenna of the radio communication system which is adjacent to an overloaded antenna of the radio communication system, if the overloaded antenna is overloaded due to interference in a communication channel of the radio communication system from the overloaded antenna to an antenna of a subscriber unit; and

11

- (b) automatically handling off subscriber units between the overloaded and adjacent antennae.
4. The method of claim 3 wherein:
- (a) the radio communication system comprises a sectorized cell;
- (b) the overloaded antenna comprises a sector antenna of the sectorized cell; and
- (c) the step of reducing the antenna power of the adjacent antenna comprises reducing the power of a sector antenna of the sectorized cell which is adjacent to the overloaded sector antenna.
5. The method of claim 3 wherein:
- (a) the radio communication system comprises a first and a second cell;
- (b) the overloaded antenna comprises an antenna in the first cell; and
- (c) the step of reducing the antenna power of the adjacent antenna comprises reducing the power of an antenna of the second cell which is adjacent to the overloaded antenna.
6. The method of claim 3 wherein the radio communication system comprises a spread-spectrum radio communication system.
7. A sectorized cellular radio communication system having dynamic distribution of communication channel load, the radio communication system having sector antennae, each sector antenna having a beamwidth and a beamlength, comprising:
- (a) beamwidth control means for:
- (i) narrowing a first sector antenna beamwidth of an overloaded sector of a cell of the radio communication system; and
- (ii) widening a second sector antenna beamwidth of an adjacent sector of the cell of the radio communication system; and
- (b) handoff means for automatically handing off subscriber units which were previously in the first sector antenna beamwidth.

12

8. The radio communication system of claim 7 wherein the radio communication system comprises a spread-spectrum radio communication system.
9. A radio communication system having dynamic distribution of communication channel load, comprising:
- (a) power control means for reducing power of an antenna of the radio communication system which is adjacent to an overloaded antenna of the radio communication system when the overloaded antenna is overloaded due to interference in a communication channel of the radio communication system from the overloaded antenna to an antenna of a subscriber unit; and
- (b) handoff means for automatically handing off subscriber units between the overloaded and adjacent antennae.
10. The radio communication system of claim 9 wherein:
- (a) the radio communication system comprises a sectorized cell;
- (b) the overloaded antenna comprises a sector antenna of the sectorized cell; and
- (c) the power control means comprises means for reducing the power of a sector antenna of the sectorized cell which is adjacent to the overloaded sector antenna.
11. The radio communication system of claim 9 wherein:
- (a) the radio communication system comprises a first and a second cell;
- (b) the overloaded antenna comprises an antenna in the first cell; and
- (c) the power control means comprises means for reducing the power of an antenna of the second cell which is adjacent to the overloaded antenna.
12. The radio communication system of claim 9 wherein the radio communication system comprises a spread-spectrum radio communication system.
- * * * * *

45

50

55

60

65